



# A descriptive analysis of enrollment and achievement among limited English proficient students in Maryland





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Summary

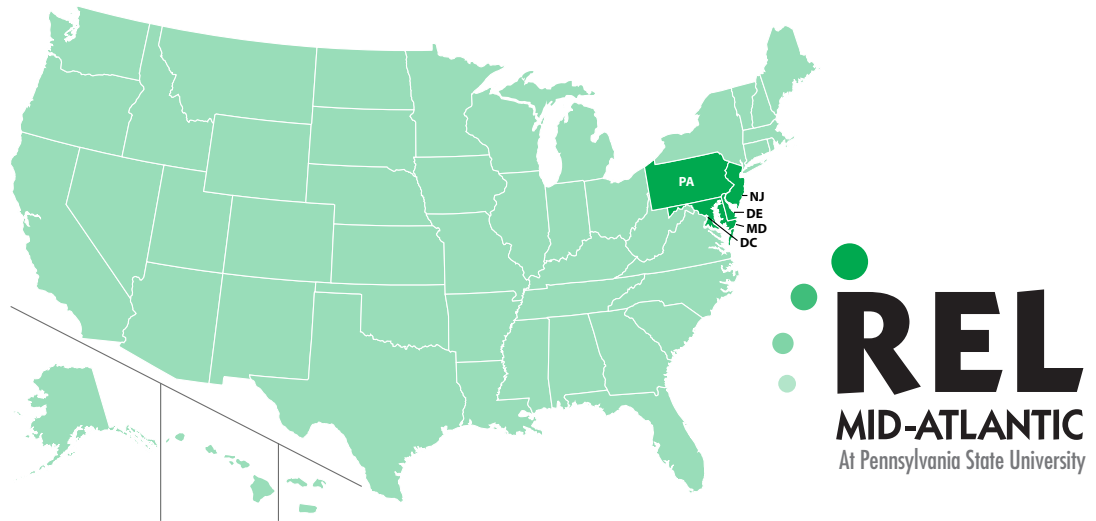
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# A descriptive analysis of enrollment and achievement among limited English proficient students in Maryland

**This study describes enrollment and achievement trends among limited English proficient (LEP) students in Maryland public schools between 2002/03 and 2008/09. It documents achievement gaps, ranging from 11 to 49 percentage points, between LEP and non-LEP students in reading and math in grades 3–8 and 10. The gaps in both subjects narrowed in all grades except in math in grades 7 and 8.**

Limited English proficient (LEP) students are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. student population, including in Maryland.<sup>1</sup> According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (2011), approximately 5.3 million LEP students were enrolled in preK–12 in 2008/09, accounting for about 10.8 percent of public school students in the United States. National enrollment of LEP students in public schools grew 57 percent between 1995 and 2009 (Flannery 2009)—almost six times the 10 percent growth rate in the general education population (students who are not enrolled in a language assistance program or a special education program).

In Maryland, the number of LEP students has also been growing, in conjunction with a rise in foreign-born residents in the state.

Between 2000 and 2009, the foreign-born population in Maryland rose from 518,315 to 730,400; in 2009, people born in other countries accounted for more than 12 percent of the state's population (Migration Policy Institute 2010).

Nationally, an achievement gap exists between LEP and non-LEP students in all subject areas, particularly subjects with high language demands (Strickland and Alvermann 2004). On statewide assessments across the country, the percentage of students who achieve proficiency (as defined by each state) is 20–30 percentage points lower among LEP students than among non-LEP students (Abedi and Dietel 2004). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to implement accountability systems to assess the achievement of all students, including students from traditionally underserved populations such as LEP students. The goal is to have all students reach proficiency and to close the achievement gap by 2014 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

This study describes LEP student enrollment and achievement trends in Maryland.<sup>2</sup> Two research questions guide this study:

- How did the enrollment of LEP students in Maryland public schools change between 2002/03 and 2008/09?

- How did performance (the percentage scoring at the proficient or advanced level) on state assessments in reading and math in grades 3–8 and 10 compare between LEP and non-LEP students in Maryland public schools from 2002/03 to 2008/09?

To report changes in LEP student enrollment and performance, the study uses enrollment and assessment data available through the Maryland State Department of Education website. The descriptive analyses of enrollment data track the number of LEP students, LEP enrollment by grade level, languages spoken by LEP students, and languages with the highest LEP enrollment statewide. The analyses of performance data present the percentage of LEP and non-LEP students who scored at the proficient or advanced level in reading and math on the Maryland School Assessment.<sup>3</sup>

The study's main findings include:

On enrollment trends:

- From 2002/03 to 2008/09, LEP student enrollment in Maryland public schools increased 73.0 percent, whereas total enrollment increased 2.1 percent. During that period, LEP student enrollment increased from 3.0 percent of total enrollment to 5.2 percent.
- From 2002/03 to 2008/09, LEP students accounted for a larger percentage of total enrollment in elementary school (grades K–5) than in middle school (grades 6–8) or in high school (grades 9–12). In 2008/09, LEP students accounted for 8.2 percent of the elementary school population, 2.7 percent of the middle school

population, and 2.5 percent of the high school population.

- From 2002/03 to 2008/09, Spanish speakers accounted for the largest percentage of LEP students, peaking at 59.9 percent in 2004/05. In 2008/09, Spanish (spoken by 56.8 percent of LEP students) had the most speakers, followed by French (3.3 percent), Chinese (3.2 percent), Vietnamese (2.3 percent), and Korean (2.2 percent). LEP students speaking “other” languages (languages other than the five most common in the state) accounted for 32.1 percent of LEP students in 2008/09.
- From 2002/03 to 2008/09, the number and percentage of LEP students speaking “other” languages increased, whereas the number and percentage of LEP students speaking Korean decreased. The number of LEP students speaking Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese increased, but the percentage of the LEP population speaking them decreased. The number of LEP students speaking French increased, but the percentage of the LEP population speaking it did not change.

On achievement trends:

- Between 2002/03 and 2008/09, LEP students' performance in reading increased 23.9–55.3 percentage points in all grades studied (grades 3–8 and 10).<sup>4</sup> The increase was higher in grades 3, 4, 5, and 10 than in grades 6, 7, and 8.
- Between 2002/03 and 2008/09, LEP students' performance in math increased 16.4–39.8 percentage points in all grades

studied (grades 3–8 and 10).<sup>5</sup> The increase was higher in grades 3, 4, and 5 than in grades 6, 7, 8, and 10.

- In every year studied, non-LEP students' performance was 12–49 percentage points higher in reading and 11–33 percentage points higher in math.
- Between 2002/03 and 2008/09, the achievement gap in reading and math between LEP and non-LEP students narrowed in grades 3–5 and grade 10; the achievement gap narrowed in reading in grades 6–8 but widened in math in grades 7 and 8.

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#### Notes

1. The Maryland State Department of Education defines an LEP student as “a student 3 years old through 21 years old enrolled in an elementary school or secondary school: (a) who (i) was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii) is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or (iii) is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and

who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (b) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the student the: (i) ability to meet the State’s proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in Regulation .05C of this chapter; (ii) ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) opportunity to participate fully in society” (Code of Maryland Regulations 2011).

2. This report is one in a series of reports for jurisdictions in the Mid-Atlantic Region (which also includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). The findings are presented in separate reports, as it may be inappropriate to compare LEP enrollment and achievement across jurisdictions because each jurisdiction has different LEP policies and definitions. The findings are also presented in separate reports because the available data varied by jurisdiction.
3. Maryland categorizes student achievement into “basic,” “proficient,” and “advanced.” Further details of the achievement categories are supplied in the main report and its appendices.
4. The reading assessment in grades 4, 6, and 7 was first administered in 2003/04. Beginning in 2004/05, the end-of-course English 2 exam served as the grade 10 Maryland School Assessment in reading.
5. The mathematics assessment in grades 4, 6, and 7 was first administered in 2003/04. Starting in 2005/06, the end-of-course algebra/data analysis exam served as the grade 10 Maryland School Assessment in mathematics.

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